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Turkish Consumers' Response to Westernised Ethical Consumption Culture: an Acculturation Theory Approach

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ABSTRACT

We argue that marketing of Western consumption practices is practically imposing a different consumption culture upon consumers in non-Western or emerging markets. By using Berry's (1980) acculturation framework, we investigate consumer acculturation towards an imposed dominant Western marketing practice (organic products) in the multiplicity of the Turkish urban city Istanbul's context.

INTRODUCTION

Aided by increasing availability and media interest, the landscape of environmental products remains resilient (Euromonitor, 2010). Organic produce is the most pertinent in this market; the second eco-friendly product type consumers are willing to pay for more (Visser, 2010; Euromonitor, 2015). Given the promise of lucrative market, last 25 years saw considerable efforts from scholars trying to identify the psychology, norms, values of ethical consumer or the contextual factors of decision-making processes (for ex. Shaw and Clarke, 1999; Stern, 2000; Auger and Devinney, 2007; Chatzidakis, Hibbert and Smith 2007; Kihlberg and Risvik, 2007; Kilbourne and Pickett, 2008; Doran 2009; Devinney et al., 2010; Romani, Grappi and Bagozzi, 2016). Albeit insightful, efforts do not come to an agreement as to what makes an ethical consumer. Recent research suggests understanding ethical consumer may not at all be possible as change necessitates deeper conflicts to be resolved between the ideologies of consumption and protecting the environment which alludes to consuming less (Johnston 2008; Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Bradshaw, 2012; Chatzidakis 2015; Carrington, Zwick and Neville, 2016). Scholars cannot exactly capture the phenomenon; but accept it as a peculiarity of Western consumption culture (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007a; Dombos, 2008; Humphery 2010; Carrington, Neville and Whitwell, 2014; Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014).

The premise of this paper accepts that ethical consumption is a Western cultural practice, and draws from acculturation theory to understand how and why this culture is/ is not adopted in different consumption contexts. We investigate this in the complexity and the multiplicity of an urban Turkish city: Istanbul. When change is imposed upon, rather than innate, ethical marketing efforts will be perceived as *imposed Westernised popular* culture. Added to this will be the multiplicity of the Turkish urban cities' consumption cultures. These offer a setting where fragmented cultures of immigrant rural and urban consumers co-exist (Sandikci and Ger, 2001; Sandikci, Ekici and Tari, 2006; Izberk-Bilgin 2010; 2012). Migrants may remain connected with their original culture and manifest this through their consumption patterns (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2010); or they put in to effort to fit in with the host culture (Mehta and Belk, 1991; Penaloza, 1994; Oswald, 1999). Through an emergent design study conducted in Istanbul, we explore Turkish consumers' attitudes towards the imposed dominant organic consumption culture. Focus groups and ethnographic observations stretched over 18 months identify four consumer segments that show different acculturation attitudes resembling Berry's (1980). Findings also suggest that there are two parallel marketing structures which are favoured by different consumer groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer Acculturation of Ethical Markets

Consumers negotiate the meaning of products in different ways and may accept/ reject them as part of their consumption practices (Cross, 2000; Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2010). As Rudmin (2003) argues, humans have likelihood of adapting to new practices and consumers manifest their attitudes via consumption practices. Berry's (1980) fourfold acculturation (assimilation, rejection, integration and marginalisation) model has been applied to various contexts (Penaloza, 1989, 1994, 2000; Oswald, 1999; Penaloza and Gilly, 1999; Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002; Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard, 2005; Ustuner and Holt, 2007; Hughes, 2010; Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2011; Chytкова, 2011). Postassimilationist acculturation researchers argue that acculturation is not a direct path; and show that consumers are in negotiation of their culture and do not necessarily always commit to one culture (Penaloza, 1989; Ger and Ostegaard, 1998; Oswald, 1999; Askegaard, et al 2005; Sandikci et al 2006).

Ethical consumerism as a product of the Western consumption culture (Humphery 2010; Dombos, 2008; Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014); is not inborn but rather *brought in* to non-Western cultures or emerging. Consumers in non-Western cultures are then faced with the new Western consumption culture, an *imposed dominant culture*, coinciding with the extant culture. Acculturation framework will shed light on whether consumers accept or reject these product types as part of their own consumption patterns. We investigate this in the context of Turkish culture, particularly in the urban city Istanbul, with added extant multiplicities and hybridised cultures of immigrant rural and urban consumers (Sandikci and Ger, 2001; Sandikci et al, 2006, Izberk-Bilgin 2010; 2012).

Turkish Consumer Acculturation towards Organic Products: Imposed Dominance vs Extant Rural

Newly affluent consumers in emerging markets are potentially the greenest consumers of the future in terms of their earnestness. As an example of this, Turkish organic packaged food shows an increase in current value by 25% in 2015 (Euromonitor, 2016). Surprisingly, Turkish demand and awareness for organic products were non-existent until the late 1990s; production was export oriented. In 1999, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA) and NGOs started to encourage the domestic consumption, and market grew until 2005 when there were 300 sales points in the country (IF-OAM, 2009).

Consumer acceptance and awareness is growing (Akgungor, Miran and Abay, 2010; Aygen and Yagci, 2013), but Turkish consumer culture also possesses unique characteristics which influence consumers' response to marketing phenomena. Scholars noted towards different consumer groups within Turkish culture, which show different consumption styles and can induce conflicts and identity negotiations when these group coincide. These conflicts can be between rural and urban consumers (ie Sandikci et al 2006; Ustuner and Holt, 2007); upper and lower-class consumers (Ustuner and Holt, 2010); or can be ideological tensions caused by different religious beliefs (Sandikci and Ger, 2002; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012).

Sandikci et al (2006) discuss the hybridised version of Western modernity which exists in newly modernised Turkish regions. "Satellite modernities" (Ma, 2001) create an environment where the

Westernised consumer and migrant consumer from the rural regions coincide and consumption culture is negotiated (Sandikci and Ger, 2001; Sandikci et al 2006; Ustuner and Holt, 2007; Izberk-Bilgin, 2010). For Turkey, a secular country with active religious power groups, the conflict of Western and rural ideologies enhances the role of products as part of consumers' social identity construction (Oncu and Weyland, 1997), particularly status induced (Ustuner and Holt, 2007). This creates fragmented consumption practices which can align with the acculturation attitudes Berry (1980) underlines.

The satellite modernity of big Turkish cities entail more rural traditional culture carrying the traces of rural consumption patterns, and a more Westernised culture, along with various fragmented versions (Oncu and Weyland, 1997; Ustuner and Holt, 2007). A more traditional/ rural segment of consumers who shop from the rural areas and open bazaars and believe that natural products are organic in nature has been documented previously (Ozbilge, 2007; Demiryurek et al 2008; Costa et al, 2014). Given Turkish domestic organic products market is growing (Euromonitor 2016), this leads to a new consumption culture being introduced to an already fragmented market. Thus, the multiplicity of the Turkish consumer culture provides a unique context to investigate the consumer attitudes towards mainstream imposed organic products culture as opposed to their extant traditional/rural consumption practices and to what extent they have acculturated.

METHODOLOGY

The research design is adoptive and emergent and evolved as fieldwork took place. The initial tool was exploratory focus group discussions. As we acquired new knowledge, more fieldwork including ethnographic observations and photographic documentation was undertaken. All fieldwork took place in Istanbul, a highly cosmopolitan city in Turkey, attracting high level of immigration from rural areas, and a melting pot of consumption cultures. Total field work was stretched over a period of 18 months with intermittent visits.

We have followed Morgan (1996) and Tadajewski's (2016) recommendations. 10 focus groups with 7-9 participants were conducted. Participants were all residents of Istanbul with some residents of squatters and existing links with the rural regions. Each discussion took between 45 to 60 minutes over lunchtime. Transcription and translation of the scripts from Turkish to English were handled by the moderator (a native Turkish speaker). We have analysed the data through simultaneous manual coding (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003, Saldana, 2009).

FINDINGS

From the initial focus groups, we identified two different marketing efforts in the Turkish organic markets. These were further supported by our consecutive ethnographic observations.

- a. Supermarkets and niche bazaars selling certified organic produce (Exhibit 1a, 1b, and 3a).
- b. Rural bazaars and markets selling traditional rural products with the unjustified organic assumption (Exhibit 2a, 2b, and 3b).

Aligned with the legitimacy framework (Dowling & Pfeffer 1975; Suchman 1995; Kates, 2004; Johnson et al. 2006; Humphreys 2010) our findings identify a parallel legitimacy in the organic markets in Turkey; each marketing type fitting with the consumption patterns of different consumer cultures in Turkey. The first group of products assume certificate legitimacy and is targeted towards the more Westernised modern consumer group, while the second assumes traditional legitimacy and targets more rural/traditional consumers in the satellite modernity of the cities.

Assimilation: Westernised Moderns

We identify a group of consumers who fully support the packaged organic products. Consumers in this category hold ecocentric views (Thompson and Barton, 1994; González et al, 2015), and find these products as representative of an escape from the chaos of the urban life. They actively search for certificates on products and complain of the lack of clarity of the legitimate certification processes. The supermarkets selling branded certified organic products, or on-line shopping site, similarly offering certified organic products are the main channels of shopping. The interesting point though, consumers tend to isolate themselves from the conventional consumers. In their discourse, the conventional consumers are usually referred to as "they". In this case, consumers tend to build their Westernised identities by using certified consumption as a manifestation tool. They look for certifications because that is what the aspired Western modernity dictates; they support organic products because that is what aspired Westerners do (Dombos, 2008) Therefore, this protection of their consumer group from conventional consumers suggests strong identification with the group and signals status induced consumption.

F2P6: Certificates are the only way to know what you pay for is organic. Some think they can grow organic vegetables at home! That is just ridiculous, you have to make sure the air is not polluted, the soil is not polluted...how can you make sure? Certifying bodies account for all these...

(Female, 30, White-collared worker, no links with rural regions)

F5P7: "If I may say so...I believe that I am part of the more educated consumers, I search for known brands and certificates when buying organic products. The demand must have increased in my neighbourhood [as] my local supermarket expanded their section..."

(Female, 56, Retired artist, no links with rural regions)

Rejection: Rural Consumers of the City

The rural-to-urban immigrants still have connections with their original home cultures. This group of consumers reject the imposed packaged consumption and retain their original consumption patterns. For this group, packaged certified products sold from in supermarkets have no legitimacy, what constitutes as legitimate is traditional and rural cues:

F7P5: "My friend brought some [organic] tomatoes for me from Canakkale"

(Male, 46, white collared worker, links with rural regions)

F7P3: "I know organic means chemical-free, but no one I know is actually uses the term for that, everyone thinks organic equals natural".

(Female, 36, housewife, links with rural regions)

We also identify the contrast between the rejecters' and assimilates' discourse. Whilst assimilates' isolate their "selves" from the conventional consumers, the rejecters' refer to a social grouping when discussing their consumption styles, ie "everybody". Similar to Bardhi et al (2011; 2012) and Oswald's (1999) arguments, this group of consumers want to feel attached to their original culture and manifest this by building their identity around this consumption

style. There are several ways to manifest this consumption pattern. Nearly every neighbourhood in Istanbul has weekly bazaars where produce from rural regions are sold. The first way of manifesting the rejection of packaged consumption is shopping from such outlets. Yet, rural-to-urban immigrants will not have access to every aspect of rural consumption styles. Immigrant life demands certain level of effort if they want to retain original cultures. This effort is seen in growing number of consumers making agreements with farms out of Istanbul.

F7P7: "We do not trust the ones that are sold in the supermarkets, but we have agreements with some farms out of Istanbul, we phone them and they send us via post"

(Male, 43, self-employed, links with rural regions)

Integration: Altered shopping methods for the same products

The multiplicity of Istanbul makes leeway for hybridised version for Westernised ethical consumption and traditional consumption patterns. A most pertinent way is to shop from ecological bazaars. These bazaars offer certified organic produce in a traditional/rural setting (Exhibit 3a). The consumers who shop from these ecological bazaars manifest traces of both cultures: acceptance of certified organic produce as the norm, and maintenance of the traditional rural shopping styles.

F6P2: "If I will shop for organic, I shop from [these] bazaars. I want to touch and smell [laughs] what I am buying...I enjoy the ambiance and the banter of the sellers! Thanks to those bazaars I learnt how a strawberry should taste like!"

(Female, 34, white-collared worker, links with rural regions)

We see a similar pattern for the traditional rural consumption culture learning to accept the certain demands of the urban life. We identify a marketing practice for branded products, which do not claim to be organic, but marketed for their rural origins. These products are sold in supermarkets and they are branded aptly as "extra geleneksel" (extra traditional, Exhibit 3b).

F6P4: "When I was a child, we used to grow fruits and vegetables in our farm. I can never forget the taste of those...and this is the closest I get to it. Yes, it is a little bit more expensive, but it is worth it"

(Male, 32, white-collared worker, links with rural regions)

We note this as an effort to integrate the urban consumption culture into the original traditional consumption culture and resemble consumers' reactions towards Protected Destination of Origin (PDO) (Grunert and Achmann, 2016). Another consumption practice that embodies elements of rural/traditional consumption whilst also adapting to the organic consumption is growing organic produce at home. This retains the element of rural farming culture but also accepts the idea and the benefits of the organic consumption. This resembles a co-optation of the dominant culture (Thompson and Coskun-Balli, 2007b; Exhibit 3c).

Marginals: Anthropocentric Skeptics

A final group of Turkish consumers seem to reject both the traditional rural culture as well as the imposed Westernised organic culture. They adhere to consumption as usual and reject both marketing efforts and focus on other priorities; such as price, convenience, quality, or value for money. As ethical and organic products have price premiums (Gifford and Nilsson, 2014; Davies and Guts-

che, 2016) they do not find their place in the marginals' shopping basket. In-between the imposed Westernised organic consumption culture and traditional/rural culture, these consumers have moved away from both. Within the marginals there is a group of sceptical consumers who believe certified organic consumption is another marketing whim.

F5P3: "People object to nuclear stations' being built but they don't mind buying a giant LED TV for their own pleasure. They are "protecting" the nature, but they don't mind turning the air conditioner on."

(Male, 29, white-collared worker, no links with rural regions)

Noted is a group of consumers who hold anthropocentric views (Thompson and Barton, 1994; González et al, 2015); believing this is the way the earth is evolving, and human kind can adapt to this. This is akin to the developmental realist justification (Devinney et al, 2010); and act of neutralising the inaction to buy socially responsible products by supporting with the argument that "this is the way we evolve", and is usually seen in emerging markets (Devinney et al, 2010).

F6P3: "If this is the natural way we are evolving, how natural can 'organic' products be? Technological advancement does bring the demands of the modern life with it, along with the convenience."

(Male, 59, retired, links with rural regions)

CONCLUSION

This study aims to contribute to the ethical consumption literature by offering a novel lens to understand the impact of imposed ethical consumption practices over existing consumption patterns. Accepting ethical consumerism as a product of the Western culture, we use acculturation framework to explore consumers' response in a non-Western emerging market: Turkey. Consumption is a vehicle to communicate identities but more importantly it provides a more fluid context in which consumers can more easily switch codes as and when required (Oswald, 1999), which makes consumption a necessary competence to cohabit in a global culture. The contemporary urban culture in Turkey further necessitates this culture swapping to be a competence of consumers (Sandikci and Ger, 2001). As Sandikci et al (2006) outline in Turkey there is no one immigrant culture and no one fixed host culture to adapt.

Our findings show that through the lens of acculturation, Turkish consumers' responses towards Westernised ethical consumerism can be captured via Berry's (1980) framework: Turkish consumers get assimilated, reject or integrate the ethical consumption culture, or they marginalise. We identify an extant organic consumption culture which resembles that of rural consumer culture, and an imposed dominant organic culture which is more institutionalised and being surged by the policy makers. These two cultures coincide in the urban cities. Both cultures are represented via different marketing structures and assume different legitimacy frames.

Findings suggest acculturation is a promising concept to further shed light on consumers' acceptance of outsider products and consumption styles, particularly for the case of emerging and non-Western cultural contexts given the dominance of the Western consumption style in general. Although promising, our study takes place in the context of Turkey, which bears its own complexities, especially for products that are potentially used as part of status induced consumption practices and signal consumers' social identities (Ustuner and

Table 1: Summary of results

	Imposed Dominant Organic Consumption Culture: Certificate Legitimacy			
	Assimilation (Y/N)	Exemplary Quotes	Rejection (N/Y)	Exemplary Quotes
	Consumers accept imposed culture of organic product consumption. Certified organic products have legitimacy. Traditional cues do not possess legitimacy. Examples of consumption practices include buying packaged certified organic products from mainstream supermarkets and websites (ekoorganik.com)	F2P6: <i>Certificates are the only way to know what you pay for is organic. Some think they can grow organic vegetables at home! That is just ridiculous, you have to make sure the air is not polluted, the soil is not polluted...how can you make sure? Certifying bodies account for all these...</i> F5P7: <i>"If I may say so...I believe that I am part of the more educated consumers, I search for known brands and certificates when buying organic products. The demand must have increased in my neighbourhood [as] my local supermarket expanded their section..."</i>	Consumer reject imposed culture. Retain traditional consumption patterns. Rural or traditional products have legitimacy and destination of origin have legitimacy. Certificates have no legitimacy. Examples of consumption practices include shopping form bazaars for authentic rural products, or shopping online from farms (memlekettengelsin, koydenyayladan, kars bali).	F7P5: <i>"My friend brought some [organic] tomatoes for me from Canakkale"</i> F7P3: <i>"I know organic means chemical-free, but no one I know is actually uses the term for that, everyone thinks organic equals natural".</i> F7P7: <i>"We do not trust the ones that are sold in the supermarkets, but we have agreements with some farms out of Istanbul, we phone them and they send us via post"</i>
Extant Organic Consumption Culture: Rural/traditional legitimacy	Integration (Y/Y)	Exemplary Quotes	Marginalisation (N/N)	Exemplary Quotes
	Consumers accept partially the imposed culture practices while retaining the rural, traditional patterns. Both certificates and rural/traditional cues have legitimacy. Examples of consumption practices include buying certified organic products from bazaars (shopping from bazaars retains the rural/traditional consumption practice), or shopping from markets for rural products branded as "extra traditional". Consumers also co-opt organic consumption by growing at home themselves (pink tomatoes network)	F6P2: <i>"If I will shop for organic, I shop from [these] bazaars. I want to touch and smell [laughs] what I am buying...I enjoy the ambiance and the banter of the sellers! Thanks to those bazaars I learnt how a strawberry should taste like!"</i> F6P4: <i>"When I was a child, we used to grow fruits and vegetables in our farm. I can never forget the taste of those...and this is the closest I get to it. Yes, it is a little bit more expensive, but it is worth it"</i>	Consumers reject imposed culture practices as well as rural/traditional patterns. Neither certificates nor rural/traditional cues have legitimacy. Skeptics and Consumers as Usual Examples of consumption practices can be defined as "consumption as usual". Other priorities (bargains, taste, convenience, accessibility) take precedence. Consumers are skeptics and do not "buy-into" organic produce or rural/traditional cues (ie extra traditional" products).	F5P3: <i>"People object to nuclear stations' being built but they don't mind buying a giant LED TV for their own pleasure. They are "protecting" the nature, but they don't mind turning the air conditioner on."</i> F6P3: <i>"If this is the natural way we are evolving, how natural can 'organic' products be? Technological advancement does bring the demands of the modern life with it, along with the convenience."</i>

Holt, 2010). Thus our results are not generalisable. Further studies should look into cross-cultural comparisons for more generalisable results or investigate the role of these products on social identity construction processes.

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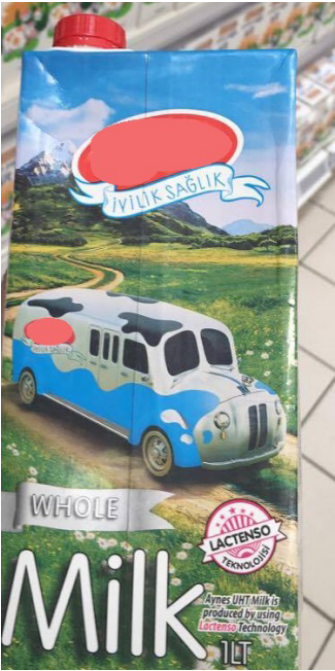

Assimilation exhibits:	Rejection exhibits:
<p>1a) Packaged certified branded organic sold in supermarkets</p>  <p>The image shows a package of 'ORGANİK DOMATES KÜP DOĞRANMIŞ' (Organic Frozen Tomato Diced Cube). The packaging features a hand holding a tomato and includes logos for TR-80-154 Non-EU Agriculture and USDA Organic.</p>	<p>2a) Rural produce sold in bazaars</p>  <p>The image shows a display of rural produce in a bazaar. On the left, there are jars of honey with a handwritten sign 'KARS KASHK KARS DEĞİTİZ KARS BALLI'. On the right, there are baskets of oranges with a handwritten sign 'KÖKEÇİZ MİS KOKULU KIRMIZI'.</p>
<p>1b) Websites selling certified organic products</p>  <p>The image shows a website banner for 'Organik' products. The banner features a rainbow and a person running, with the text '3.000 organik ürün çeşidi ile 10 yıldır Türkiye'nin Lider Organik Mağazası' (With 3,000 organic product varieties for 10 years, the leading organic store in Turkey).</p>	<p>2b) Websites selling rural produce</p>  <p>The image shows a website for 'Kestane Balı' (Chestnut Honey). The website features a jar of honey and text describing the product as '%100 Doğal Kestane Balı' (100% Natural Chestnut Honey) and listing various health benefits.</p>
Integration exhibits:	Marginals/ Skeptics and consumers as usual exhibits:
<p>3a) Shopping for certified organic from bazaars"</p>  <p>The image shows a person shopping for certified organic products in a bazaar. The person is looking at a display of fresh vegetables, including leafy greens and tomatoes, which are labeled as organic.</p> <p>3b) Packaged rural produce sold in supermarkets: "extra traditional"</p>  <p>The image shows a jar of 'EXTRA GİLENEKSEL MANDALIN REÇELİ' (Extra Traditional Mandarin Preserves) sold in supermarkets. The jar is made of clear glass and has a gold-colored lid.</p>	<p>4a) Bargain brands/products</p>  <p>The image shows a carton of 'WHOLE Milk' by Lactenso. The carton features a blue and white design with a cow and the text 'WHOLE Milk' and 'LACTENSO TEKNOLOJİSİ'.</p>
<p>3c) Co-optation: Growing organic traditionally at home</p>  <p>The image shows a person growing organic produce at home. The person is using clear plastic bottles to grow plants, with the text 'Co-optation: Growing organic traditionally at home' overlaid.</p>	

Figure 1: Acculturation Exhibits

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